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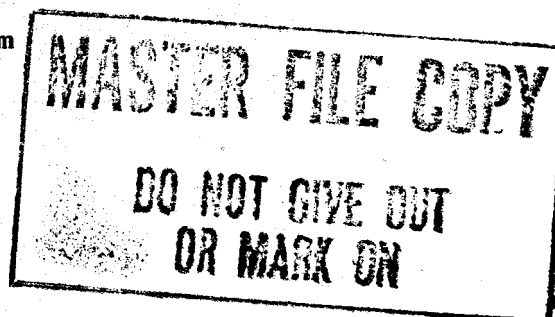
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Prospects for Anti-US Terrorism

Interagency Intelligence Memorandum
Memorandum to Holders



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NI IIM 82-10002
9 August 1983

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MEMORANDUM TO HOLDERS
NI IIM 82-10002
PROSPECTS FOR ANTI-US TERRORISM

Information available as of 4 August 1983 was
used in the preparation of this Memorandum.

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SCOPE NOTE

This Memorandum to Holders updates two earlier examinations of *Prospects for Anti-US Terrorism*, Interagency Intelligence Memorandum (IIM) 82-10002, 26 March 1982, and IIM 81-10018, 6 October 1981. In addition to analyzing the sources and implications of terrorism against US interests in 1982 and early 1983 and offering tentative projections about where terrorism against Americans is most likely to occur over the next year or so, it assesses the accuracy of judgments reached in the previous IIMs. It explains why actual developments differed significantly from past predictions and suggests some of the constraints that limit the accuracy of forecasts dealing with terrorism.

In contrast to the earlier IIMs, this update distinguishes between significant attacks against US targets—those that resulted in major property damage (usually more than \$10,000), personal injury, or kidnapping—and statistical counts of all anti-US terrorist incidents, which include large numbers of threats and minor bombings.

In our discussion of anti-US terrorism within the United States, we include only those incidents that involve acts against Americans undertaken or sponsored by non-US citizens or entities.

Note: This Memorandum to Holders, approved by the National Foreign Intelligence Board, was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Council. It was coordinated with the Central Intelligence Agency; the Defense Intelligence Agency; the National Security Agency; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Energy, the Treasury, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps.

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KEY JUDGMENTS

Principal Developments of the Past Year

The number of significant terrorist attacks against Americans showed little change from 1981 to 1982 and has declined sharply so far in 1983. The number of Americans killed or wounded decreased from 37 in 1981 to 12 in 1982. The bombing of the US Embassy in Beirut in April 1983 killed 17 Americans, but this incident was not typical of anti-US terrorism in the past year—which generally has been less lethal. In the first six months of 1983, apart from the Beirut bombing only one American was killed and three were wounded. Attempts to assassinate individual Americans dropped to seven in 1982 from 14 in 1981, and kidnappings also declined. The number of anti-US terrorist attacks thus far in 1983 resulting in major property damage, personal injury, or kidnapping is 36, as compared with 50 to 60 in the same period in each of the two previous years. The apparent sharp drop from 1981 to 1982-83 in the terrorist threat to Americans conveyed by these statistics might not have occurred if any of a number of significant incidents, such as two airplane bombings, had led to a greater loss of life.

The hardcore terrorist groups of greatest earlier concern—the Italian Red Brigades, West German Red Army Faction (RAF), various radical Palestinians, and those sponsored by Libyan leader Qadhafi—have been virtually inactive in 1982-83, contrary to our expectations. There have been no signs of additional links among them. The Red Brigades and RAF met severe reversals because counterterrorist activities in Italy and West Germany were far more successful than we anticipated. Operations of radical Palestinians may have been adversely affected by the dispersal of the PLO from Beirut after the June 1982 invasion of Lebanon by Israel. In any case, when they were active they generally chose to strike Israeli, European Jewish, and moderate Arab targets rather than Americans. Qadhafi may have pulled back from anti-US terrorism because of the adverse publicity his threats against senior US officials received, private US Government warnings and official actions, and the fact that he diverted some of his clandestine assets to operations in Africa. With respect to radical Palestinians and to Libya, we also may have overestimated, on the basis of a few alarming reports of their intentions, the danger they posed.

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The terrorists who took center stage in 1982-83 differed from the more committed professionals of 1981 and early 1982. Members of the more recently active groups—the Revolutionary Cells and Red Army Faction Sympathizers of West Germany, the Revolutionary People's Struggle (ELA) of Greece, and several small groups in Italy and Spain—tend to be “weekend,” low-risk terrorists. Thus far, they have exploded low-yield, improvised bombs, apparently more for political/propaganda effect than to cause injury. Their organization, operation, and targeting practices usually differ from the hardcore groups. Moreover, we do not believe they currently have international ties to the same extent as have some members of the RAF or Red Brigades. As a consequence, the danger Americans experienced in 1982 and early 1983, with the major exception of the Beirut bombing, has been less than we forecast. Moreover, much of the activity of these lower risk terrorists was concentrated in the period April to August 1982, when 60 percent of all significant anti-US terrorist acts for the year took place—an outburst of terrorism occasioned largely by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and, to a lesser extent, by President Reagan's trip to Western Europe.

State Support to Terrorism

Several radical governments have demonstrated a continued willingness to use terrorism as a foreign policy tool. Of particular concern to Americans are *Syria* and *Iran*. Officials of one or both of these countries—and not just terrorist organizations—may have instigated and facilitated the bombing of our Embassy in Beirut. In general, the governments of Iran and Syria use their own officials and operatives to attack foreign targets, besides employing and commissioning other terrorist organizations. There is good evidence of cooperation on terrorist matters between Syria and Iran.

As anticipated in last year's Interagency Intelligence Memorandum (IIM), the *Soviets*—together with the *Cubans* and *Nicaraguans*—have continued to maintain their support of anti-US terrorist acts by backing governments or organizations that conduct or directly support terrorism. The Soviets also continue to sustain anti-American propaganda programs and demonstrations, such as their campaign to exploit anti-INF (intermediate-range nuclear forces) sentiments in Western Europe, which contribute significantly to environments favoring anti-American terrorism.

Active *Libyan* involvement in terrorism has ebbed in the last year, although signs of Qadhafi's willingness to attack Americans have not.

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Constraints on Estimative Accuracy

Comparing past estimates with what has actually happened suggests that we are more likely to produce useful terrorism forecasts along some dimensions than others. We seem reasonably able to predict, for example, when specific policy initiatives by the United States or its Allies may evoke terrorist responses. We can also identify which radical governments are likely to use clandestine violence to further what they believe to be their state interests. We are much less able to predict, however, which particular terrorist groups will be active and what form their attacks will take, because most of them are very small organizations with limited resources and their capabilities can change quickly. It is also difficult to know when governments will mount serious counter-terrorist campaigns and how successful they will be. Moreover, we have sometimes been misled by depending on individual reports that were judged reliable at the time but have since been found questionable, and by focusing too narrowly on the historically demonstrated capabilities of existing groups; it is now clearer that the terrorism prevalent at any particular moment tends to be imitative of recent high-visibility incidents.

Anti-US Terrorist Threat Over the Next Year or So

Anti-American terrorism will remain a serious problem, and the number of anti-US terrorism incidents is likely to rise again over coming months, the most dangerous areas being the Middle East, Western Europe, and Central America.

Such terrorist acts—some possibly accompanying violent demonstrations—are likely to originate not only with terrorist organizations themselves but also with governments backing such actions, directly or indirectly, as instruments of state policy designed to further specific national objectives. The most likely examples will be Syrian efforts—with Soviet urging—to use radical groups to undercut US policies concerning Lebanon, Israel, and the Palestinian question; Iranian efforts against US policies; Soviet-backed efforts to delay or complicate INF deployment; and Cuban and Nicaraguan efforts—supported by the USSR—to use terrorist acts to frustrate US initiatives in Central America.

The indirect danger to Americans from those terrorists—such as Armenians—who act indiscriminately and often kill innocent bystanders, will remain.

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Middle East. This region will continue to rank high among danger areas for Americans during the next 12 months. Rejectionist states and radical Palestinian groups are likely to turn increasingly to terrorism to disrupt the negotiations on removing foreign troops from Lebanon and to undermine moderates among Palestinian and Arab leaders. Syrian influence on both PLO and non-PLO radicals is growing markedly, and, although few of them have attacked US interests directly in the past, Syria may direct those groups under its control to conduct terrorist activities against US personnel and interests. The likelihood of such action is rising, now that Syria has expelled Arafat and Soviet influence in Syria has intensified.

The terrorist threat posed by the mainline PLO groups remains an enigma. PLO leader *Arafat* has successfully enforced a ban on international terrorism by PLO-affiliated groups since the mid-1970s, but he would probably yield to pressures to return to terrorist attacks if he believed they were essential to reestablishing his influence over the PLO. *Qadhafi* is funding some of the PLO rebels; we know that he has asked certain of them, so far without success, to conduct terrorist activities against US interests; and he would probably not hesitate to back them in attacks against US targets if he thought that concealing such support would make it more difficult for Washington to retaliate against him directly. *Iran* is beginning to fund Fatah dissidents through Syria, and it may encourage fanatical Shia splinter groups to mount suicide attacks against US installations in Persian Gulf countries and in Lebanon.

Western Europe. We expect a continuation of tough antiterrorist policies in most of Western Europe. This should inhibit the ability of the RAF and the Red Brigades to mount major terrorist campaigns for some months, although they may lash out at specific targets from time to time.

In any event, INF deployments in December 1983 will further intensify "peace movement" activities that are already being exploited by the USSR and its associates. That environment will probably also give rise to increased activity by the Revolutionary Cells in West Germany and other left fringe extremists. These groups appear capable of continuing low-risk operations against US interests almost with impunity. They may mount harassment attacks against such prime propaganda targets as munitions trains. As long as these operations are carried out by groups like the Revolutionary Cells rather than the hardcore professionals of the RAF, however, they are more likely to

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create public alarm or possibly disrupt the flow of munitions than to significantly damage the trains or their personnel. The possibility will remain that radical Palestinians or mainline PLO groups also will mount major terrorist attacks in Western Europe.

Low-level anti-American terrorism is also likely to continue in Greece, [REDACTED]

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Anti-American terrorism may again rise in *Turkey*, although most certainly not to pre-1980 levels, when a civilian government takes office in November 1983.

Latin America. Anti-US terrorism is likely to increase in all of Central America, especially in *Honduras* and *El Salvador*, with the growth of US involvement and of opposition by Cuba, Nicaragua, and various insurgent groups. In *Colombia*, the recent failure of President Betancur's amnesty program for insurgents and the resulting deterioration in internal security have caused an increase in the terrorist and kidnapping threats to Americans there. In *Peru*, danger to Americans may also be rising as the Shining Path guerrillas step up their attacks against government and commercial targets.

In the United States. Qadhafi, if he feels sufficiently threatened by US actions, might attempt to mount terrorist operations in the United States. The possibility also exists that Palestinian, Central American, Iranian, or Armenian terrorists, or Cuba, perhaps using assets in the Cuban exile community, might decide to carry their battle to the US home ground. Although there is, as yet, no hard evidence that such threats are developing, the 1984 Olympics, scheduled for July in Los Angeles, might provide a tempting target for foreign terrorists.

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